

# INTERNATIONAL OSOYOOS LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL

## DECEMBER QUARTERLY CALL

Monday, December 4, 2023  
10:00-12:00 AM (PST)

### BOARD MEMBERS

Cindi Barton	Chair, U.S. Section
Dave Hutchinson (chair)	Chair, Canadian Section
Ted White	Board Member, Canadian Section
Sue McKortoff	Board Member, Canadian Section
Brian Symonds	Board Member, Canadian Section
Anna Warwick Sears	Board Member, Canadian Section
John Arterburn (absent)	Board Member, U.S. Section
Col. Kathryn Sanborn (absent)	Board Member, U.S. Section
Kris Kauffman	Board Member, U.S. Section
Arnie Marchand	Board Member, U.S. Section

### BOARD STAFF and ASSISTANTS

Martin Suchy (late joining)	Secretary, Canadian Section
Andy Long	Secretary, U.S. Section
Sonja Michelsen	Technical Assistant to Colonel Kathryn Sanborn
Sarah Dunn	U.S. Section Assistant
Kate Alexander	Canadian Section Assistant
Katie Slimmon	Canadian Section Assistant

### IJC REPRESENTATIVES

Rob Caldwell	Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section
John Allis	Engineering Advisor, U.S. Section
Catherine Lee-Johnston	Environment Advisor, Canadian Section
Adam Greely (absent)	Senior Science Advisor, U.S. Section
Tia Dumoulin	Communication Advisor, Canadian Section
Paul Allen	Communication Manager, Canadian Section
Jeff Kart	Communication Advisor, U.S. Section

### GUESTS

Scott Vanderkooi	USGS Washington Water Science Center Director
Connie Chapman	Controller of Water Rights - Province of BC

## **ACRONYMS**

ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Ecology	Washington State Department of Ecology
IJC	International Joint Commission
IOLBC	International Osoyoos Lake Board of Control
IWB	International Watershed Board
IWI	International Watershed Initiative
NHC	Northwest Hydraulic Consultants
OBWB	Okanagan Basin Water Board
OLRS	Okanagan Lake Regulation System
OLWQS	Okanagan Lake Water Quality Society
SNOTEL	Snow Telemetry
USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

## **Agenda**

### **1) Welcome, Introductions & Approve Meeting Agenda**

Dave Hutchinson, the Canadian section co-chair, opened the conference call at 10:00 PST and went over the agenda items. Mr. Hutchinson welcomed Scott Vanderkooi as the replacement for the retired US Co-Chair Cindi Barton. Mr. Vanderkooi introduced himself and detailed his past work experiences and qualifications. He has worked with the USGS for 26 years and started as the Director of the Washington Science Center on December 4th. The rest of the meeting attendees, and absent Board members, were introduced to Mr. Vanderkooi in a roundtable format.

### **2) Approve meeting minutes**

#### September quarterly call

Dave Hutchinson moved to accept the September quarterly call minutes and Anna Warwick Sears seconded the motion.

#### 2023 annual board meeting

Mr. Hutchinson had a couple of comments on the 2023 annual board meeting minutes. He enquired about the spelling of Chief Louie's name and suggested checking to make sure it was spelled correctly in the meeting notes document.

Dr. Warwick Sears mentioned that she had corrected a few things in the Board meeting minutes document without tracking changes. The main change she had made was regarding the transcription of a comment she had made about Zosel Dam's vulnerability to invasive mussels. She emphasized that the dam wouldn't keep the invasive mussels from spreading but instead would allow the dam to continue operating if any mussels were to get into the system. She also mentioned that the sentence that talked about working with lands in the description of Lauren Terbasket's presentation was vague and needed clarification or removal.

Anna Warwick Sears moved to adopt the minutes with the proposed changes, Brian Symonds seconded the motion.

## 2023 annual public meeting

Dave Hutchinson mentioned he made a small edit to the introduction to change the purpose of Zosel's Dam's construction from logging to mill pond operation. Anna Warwick Sears had comments on how question two of the question-and-answer section was transcribed. She said she recalled the conversation going differently and that the minutes improperly reflected the conversation that Craig Jordan had with the Board. Katryna Slimmon responded by saying that she doesn't think it was Craig Jordan who spoke to this question, but she will listen to the recording of the meeting to confirm. Anna Warwick Sears insisted that she had conversations with other Board members about whether the lake was held too low noting that no drought conditions were declared but that it was one of the worst drought years in BC this summer. Brain Symonds brought up that the Applicant was in full compliance because the lake level is to a degree up to their discretion and that he doesn't want to confuse the public. Dr. Warwick Sears agreed that the public should know that there was no non-compliance, but that there was still enough water in the system to bring Osoyoos Lake levels up.

The consensus was to postpone the approval of the public meeting minutes until the next Board meeting.

### **3) Hydrologic update**

Katryna Slimmon provided the hydrological update on behalf of Martin Suchy. It was reported by both the BC government snow gauges and the US SNOTEL stations that snowpack in the Okanagan and Similkameen Basins is lower than normal. The flows recorded in the Similkameen River were low but there is a possibility that they will increase following the forecasted storms later in the week. At Nighthawk the latest Similkameen River daily mean flow was 365cfs (10.3cms). The current water supply forecast for the 2024 April – July Similkameen River volumetric flow is sitting below 1 million acre-ft, which would trigger drought condition 8a. The Okanagan Lake weekly net-inflow was still negative, which is abnormal for the time of year, further indicating a dry start to the water year. As a result, the controlled outflow of Okanagan Lake has been kept low and was 224cfs (6.3cms) measured at Penticton. There was a notable drop in discharge from the Okanagan Lake dam at the beginning of November. Okanagan Lake was at an elevation of 1,120.75ft (341.6m), which is at the 20<sup>th</sup> historical percentile. Osoyoos Lake level was sitting at 909.52ft (277.22m) and is well below the mean and even dropping to levels lower than last year. Although the levels are low, the Applicant has remained in compliance with the Order. The flow of Okanagan River measured at Oroville represents the outflow of Osoyoos Lake and was recorded at 387cfs (11cms). No evidence of ice jams or backwater effects have been observed this calendar year. The current flow conditions in Okanagan River pose no ecological concerns.

The 3-month daily mean precipitation and temperature were reported. Precipitation and snowpack in the Okanagan Basin have been lower than normal. Ms. Slimmon noted that there was a slight contrast between the modeled and observed gauge values for precipitation. Temperatures have been slightly warmer than normal, with a brief cold snap occurring in October.

The Okanagan and Similkameen Basins were at a BC Drought Advisory level 2: Very Dry, down from levels 4 and 5 which were declared in the summer. Currently, the BC Drought Advisory is saying that adverse impacts are unlikely, however, impacts are still possible due to the prolonged extent of the summer drought.

The occurrence of an El Niño has been predicted at a high probability into June. This is expected to produce higher freezing levels with less snow at lower elevations. The 3-month probabilistic forecast predicts higher-than-normal temperatures, and near to below-normal precipitation for the region.

Brian Symonds reported that the Okanagan Lake water level has been trending low for quite a while and the upcoming atmospheric river is likely not to hit that basin or significantly change the water forecast trajectory. The soil moisture deficit resulting from the drought conditions over the summer may additionally impact the snow runoff. The current forecasts may be predicting higher runoff than what will be observed later in the water year. The release from Okanagan Lake is already being kept at a minimum and this may negatively impact the redds in the riverbed. It would be better from a fish health perspective if the flow was closer to 8 to 10cms (283 to 353cfs). 2024 could be a challenging year for water and fisheries management.

Mr. Hutchinson reiterated that the seasonal runoff forecast could be biased high. If the water forecast is close to the cutoff for drought declaration, the board will need to consider that the model might not be incorporating the soil moisture deficit.

No other questions or comments were brought forward.

#### **4) IWB scoping update**

IJC Environment Advisor Catherine Lee-Johnston gave an update on the International Watershed Board (IWB) scoping process. She explained they are in the process of holding meetings with people in the Basin to listen to local views and to uncover any potential concerns. Groups and individuals that have been met with so far include the Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society (OLWQS), the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), the Town of Osoyoos Operations Management, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), Connie Chapman with the government of BC, and an Okanagan County commissioner. There are other meetings in the works and a meeting with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen has been set up for later in the week. IJC Advisors Lee-Johnston and Greeley are tracking the feedback they receive and will be communicating it to the commissioners. Ms. Lee-Johnston expressed her gratitude for the Board's support.

Dave Hutchinson asked if the IJC needs any support from the Board at the outreach meetings. Ms. Lee-Johnston answered saying that the Board's connections may be helpful if the IJC has difficulty getting in contact with any groups. She also wanted to confirm with the board if the logistics of the current updates were sufficient. Mr. Hutchinson suggested circulating the meeting invites to the Co-Chairs and if they are not able to attend, they will circulate the invite to the Board. Cindi Barton supported this suggestion. Dr. Warwick Sears mentioned that she would like to be kept informed on what groups the IJC is meeting with and that she would help identify any gaps in the groups consulted.

Mr. Hutchinson asked about the projected timeline and the end goal of this engagement. Ms. Lee-Johnston responded that she would be able to provide more information on this after meeting with the commissioners at the end of this week. The goal initially was to have the engagement meetings wrapped up by the end of the calendar year but the team may seek an extension. The product will be a report presented to the commissioners that includes the collected feedback and recommendations.

Martin Suchy asked if there were any groups that were missing from the list. Ms. Lee-Johnston answered that in her opinion, yes there was, and emphasized the lack of engagement with the local Indigenous communities.

Sue McKortoff mentioned she was invited by Chief Louie to attend an Okanagan Leadership Table on December 13 and if the agenda allows, she can bring up the IWB scoping with the other attendees. Anna Warwick Sears added that she thinks Commissioner Merrel-Ann Phare is going to be present at these meetings but will be acting in a different role. It was confirmed by Ms. McKortoff that Commissioner Phare is listed as a confirmed attendee.

Arnie Marchand suggested that some of the chiefs are not the best to talk to in this scenario and that he could get in contact with the correct people for the IJC Advisors. Ms. Lee-Johnston said she would pass the contact information along to him.

Kris Kauffman asked if the applicant has any added standing in the decision-making. Ms. Lee-Johnston was unsure whether she could properly answer Mr. Kauffman's inquiry as it may depend on how the report is written. She said she would make a note that this question came from the Board.

Mr. Hutchinson asked if the report is going to be confidential to the commissioners or if it will be made available to the Board. Ms. Lee Johnston said that they would ask and follow up.

## **5) Communications Plan review**

Andy Long gave an overview of the current communications plan, outlining the seven objectives, the communications matrix, and the recently added figure showing the review process for communications such as new releases. There was a conversation about the figure and when the IJC communications staff should be consulted in the process of reviewing a communication. The consensus was that IJC communication staff should be consulted earlier in the process, and the figure would be edited to reflect those changes in procedure.

Dave Hutchinson stated that he is happy with the communications plan and that he considers it as an evergreen document that will be edited as procedures change.

Brian Symonds enquired about the possibility of needing to expedite the communications approval and release process at certain times of year when dealing with time-sensitive information. Mr. Hutchinson noted that it is important for the secretaries and board chairs to maintain the flow of information. A conversation will have to be had regarding delegation when someone important to the process flow is absent.

Martin Suchy added that a request for information doesn't have the same type of flow plan and that the Board may have to ensure that this is properly documented. He asked the meeting attendees to provide suggestions on how they would like to make the distinction between communications that the secretaries can release without Board review and those that need approval. Mr. Hutchinson said that he would provide some feedback after he had given it some thought.

Cindi Barton suggested detailing a slightly altered process that deals with re-releasing information that has been previously released to the public. Tia Dumoulin added that the Board may want to consider

developing a crisis communications plan and that it could fit into the bigger plan once completed. Mr. Symonds seconded the need for a crisis plan.

Anna Warwick Sears mentioned the OBWB maintains an up-to-date list of news outlets, and she will be able to pass that info to the Board secretaries.

The secretaries agreed to create more flow charts and to clean up the comments made for the March meeting. They will be prioritizing cleaning the main document up before moving on to the crisis one. The plan is to address and review the communications plan around this time every year.

Dr. Warwick Sears asked for the communications plan to be put in a more obvious place on the IOLBC SharePoint site. Mr. Suchy described where it was located. Mr. Hutchinson suggested that the secretaries present a 5 to 10-minute overview of the SharePoint site at the next meeting.

## **6) 2024 Work Plan review**

Martin Suchy described where on the IOLBC SharePoint the 2024 Work Plan is located. He went over the changes made to a previous version to create the upcoming year's document. It was noted that there have been no changes to the intro section or the ongoing core activities. The main changes were made to the priorities to account for those that have been completed.

Items crossed out include the Dam webcam and the push notification system priorities.

The communications plan is still being updated and will remain on the priority list for now. It will hopefully be removed from the list next year.

There were some edits done on the Phase II modeling effort priority. A more detailed update on the delays and progress of this item was given by Rob Caldwell later in the meeting.

The IWI Ice Jam project remains on the list and was left relatively unchanged. Projected to be completed in 2024, an update on the project was given by Andy later in the meeting.

The priority regarding bathymetric data collection for the analytical model has been moved to a lower spot on the list.

Another item that has moved down is the Osoyoos Lake water balance model. It hasn't been removed from the work plan to allow for the potential of an IWI proposal.

The other model on the list was the USACE analytical model for the operation of the dam. This item has been left untouched for a few years and Mr. Suchy posed the question of whether it should be removed. Sonja Michelsen added that this was intended to be more of an operational / day-to-day model and that it may still serve a purpose if the Board is able to allocate resources to its completion. She also noted that the bathymetry data can now be used as inputs to this model. Anna Warwick Sears seconded that the models being created by NHC for the Phase II modeling project are more focused on forecasting and not operational-level activities. Cindi Barton outlined the benefits of having the analytical model as a resource for dam staff, especially when there is high turnover. Dave Hutchinson suggested keeping this item on the list and seeking funding for it in the future.

Mr. Suchy recapped the conversation by saying that they may change the language in the plan and that any additional edits or comments can be sent to the secretaries in the next week or so.

Dr. Barton brought up the topic of records management and the possibility of adding this as a task in the core activities section. It was noted that the board doesn't really have an archive of their records and through default the website is becoming the archival mechanism. She posed the question whether this is sufficient and should be prioritized. Some historical records have only been kept in their paper copies in filing cabinets and still need to be scanned and saved somewhere communal.

Mr. Hutchinson asked about what the IJC has kept archives and the extent to which it is the Board's responsibility to keep their own. The suggestion to make this a work objective was made. IJC Advisor Caldwell clarified that the IJC's record is only as good as what is shared with the commission from the Board and that it is the secretaries' responsibility to keep an adequate record. The IJC can work with the Board to develop a system of records. Mr. Suchy explained that one purpose of using the SharePoint site is to use it as an accessible archive. Some ECCO and USGS scanned paper files that were on network drives are now being uploaded to the SharePoint site. Dr. Warwick Sears encouraged making as much information available to the public as possible, but that they should have a clear idea as to what they don't want available to the public. She brought up her experience with the non-IJC Skagit transboundary board where members of the public made requests through the Freedom of Information Act because information was not publicly available. A brief history of the Skagit Board was given, as some Board members were not aware of its presence and purpose.

Mr. Suchy stated that they could add a priority to address public record management to the Work Plan.

Mr. Hutchinson suggested the approval of the 2024 Work Plan by email over the next couple of weeks, barring no concerns from the Board.

## **7) Ecology dam upgrades letter**

Dave Hutchinson thanked the Board and IJC Advisors for their work on the Zosel Dam upgrade letter. The letter was sent out on November 3 and a follow-up letter was sent on November 21. It was reported that Sage Park has left her role at Ecology, but that Craig Jordan is still a good point of contact for Ecology and Zosel Dam operations. The Co-Chairs received a letter from the IJC on November 14, asking for an update on the proposed dam improvements at the Spring Appearances. Before responding to the IJC Commission, the Board needs some clarification from Ecology. Mr. Suchy reported that an email was received from Ecology acknowledging the second letter. If no additional plan or information has been received from Ecology in the next couple of weeks, the secretaries will follow up with them.

## **8) Board Project status updates**

### Phase II Modelling

IJC Advisor Rob Caldwell updated the Board on the status of the Phase II modeling project. It is very close to starting. They are down to the approval of the end date, which is likely March 31, 2025. If this date is approved soon, there is potential for a Phase II kickoff meeting before Christmas.

### Ice Jam

Andy Long summarized the information he had received from his USGS colleagues Steve Breen and Nicholas Sutfin. There has been no evidence of ice jams from 2014-2018. However, there is evidence of recent ice jams in four consecutive years from 2019-2022. An analysis of the historical period 77 years prior that contains adequate data (1942-2018) suggests that only seven jams occurred, an occurrence rate that is much less frequent than the recent 5-year period. For the 77-year historical record, there are only 2 years in which there is evidence of consecutive ice jams: 1983 and 1984. They are now looking at historical weather records to see if there are any factors that can be used to predict ice jams and ideally be able to have a system that identifies early warning signs.

Mr. Hutchinson wanted to clarify that the gauges (i.e. the lake level and auxiliary gauge) used historically were the same as the ones used today. If not, this might impact the comparisons. Dr. Long said that he would pass this question along and that they may investigate this.

Brian Symonds commented on including the date when the current dam was conditioned in the report, in case it had any impact on the frequency. Mr. Hutchinson also suggested indicating the dates when the dredging occurred.

Anna Warwick Sears asked for this short synopsis. Dr. Long said that he'll be getting more details from Steve Breen and may be able to send information over. He emphasized that any extra eyes are appreciated, and if anyone has comments or suggestions to let him know.

#### **9) Upcoming calls and meetings schedule**

The dates for the March, June, September, and December meetings, along with two tentative dates for shorter calls for drought declarations have been set. The dates for the 2024 annual board and public meetings have also been selected and are October 2, 3 & 4. Martin Suchy indicated that Co-Chair Hutchinson wished to start the board meeting on Wednesday afternoon to address all Business Items and then continue the meeting on Thursday. There is potential for an organized activity on Wednesday evening and the current suggestion is curling. A few field trip options are currently being considered. One is a day on the lake, and the other is a visit to the ONA fish hatchery. Mr. Suchy asked for comments and suggestions via email as the secretaries develop the meeting itinerary.

#### **10) Round Table**

Dave Hutchinson thanked Cindi Barton for the work she has done on this Board over the last 23 years of service. Kris Kauffman echoed this sentiment.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 PM PST.